

## Big Paper Possible Questions

1. How has the last thirty years of postmodernism in our universities affected American society?
2. What is there about American society that makes baseball America's "national pastime"?
3. Is it true that the U.S. needs to eliminate its national debt?
4. Various impairments of the mind are commonly associated with old age. To what extent are these biological in origin? To what extent, social in origin?
5. Why does nodding of the head signify Yes and shaking of the head No?
6. Why does music written in a minor key sound "sad" or "downbeat," while music in a major key sounds "happy" or "upbeat"?
7. Are parents today more narcissistic than parents of previous generations?
8. Is our adversarial legal system—in which an attorney dwells just on the facts that support the side by which he or she is paid—the system likeliest to achieve justice?
9. Do Americans have the right to own and use guns?
10. What is meant by the phrase "the rise of religious fundamentalism"? Is it an actual current phenomenon? If so, what accounts for its occurrence at this point in history?
11. What is time?
12. Some have claimed that no true democracies ever go to war with each other. In fact, does history bear that claim out? If so, explain how democracy exerts such an effect.
13. What accounts for changes in fashion in clothing?
14. Has the fact that divorce is much more common now than it was fifty years ago made divorce easier for adults or children to deal with?
15. The poet John Keats once wrote (in his poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn"),

Beauty is truth, truth beauty,---that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

By contrast, Plato (in *The Republic*) warns of poetry's power to make a falsehood *seem* true, by beautifying it.

What, then, is the relationship between beauty, as achieved by the artist, and truth?

16. Many admirers of Ronald Reagan credit him and his policies with the fall of Communism. Is that claim justified?
17. Why is English today different from the English of the King James Bible?
18. How does it affect one's personality to be the oldest of two or more children in a family? Alternatively, how does it affect one's personality to be the youngest child? The middle child? (Of these three questions address only one.)
19. Why, if two wrongs don't make a right, do two negatives make a positive in mathematics?
20. You are the CEO of a consumer products company. How would you determine the portion of your budget to devote to advertising?
21. Is success, as Thomas Edison claimed, 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration, or the other way around?
22. What part should *intent* play in determining the punishment for crime? (For instance, if a man attempts to kill another man but fails to kill him and, instead, only wounds him, should he receive any lighter a sentence than the man who intends to kill another man and *succeeds* in doing so?)
23. What, exactly, is it about good jokes that makes people laugh?
24. Is it true that now it takes more than one full-time job for the average household to maintain the same standard of living enjoyed fifty years ago? If so, how has that situation come to be?
25. Is music a "universal language"—a language that works across all national and cultural divisions?
26. Would the cause of racial equality have progressed more slowly if, in 1861, Abraham Lincoln had simply let the Southern states secede?
27. World records in certain track events—such as the pole vault, javelin throw, and marathon run—have improved dramatically over the last hundred years. What accounts for that fact?
28. How, if at all, can we prevent the use of nuclear bombs, chemical weapons and biological weapons by small groups of terrorists?
29. Identify the likeliest actual effect of a voucher system on the quality of public schools.
30. Does thought require language?
31. Kate O'Leary writes, "Students need basic science courses if they are later to take intelligent positions on issues like nuclear power plants." Would you agree?
32. How does your generation differ from that of the 1960's?